Writers in Residence

Spring 2022  Hiram College Cohort
For the 49,000 youth confined in a juvenile facility in the US.

For the 2,200 youth confined in a juvenile facility in Ohio.

These youth have been separated from family and friends. Many of them don’t feel seen, heard, or understood.

Their creative writing in this text rewrites the stereotypes and biases of a juvenile in detention.

This is for them.
Mission

TEACH. We teach creative writing to youth who are incarcerated.

EMPOWER. We empower our residents’ voices.

ASSIST. We assist in their re-entry.
JUSTICE. We believe in creating an environment where justice becomes visible, where restoration from wrong is possible, where people are seen as more than their worst moments, where people can create a future not doomed to repeat the past.

EMPOWERMENT. We believe that our residents can build their self-esteem, resilience, and power through working on their writing, their reflection, their communication, through the creative writing workshop experience.

DIGNITY. We believe that our residents deserve to discover and recognize their own dignity and self-worth through our creative writing workshops. We also believe that if we respect ourselves, our residents, and our student volunteers then we successfully lead by example.

COMMUNITY. We believe in the power of community. This means that we continually welcome and accept our residents into our communities because they belong to an environment that promotes individuality and empowerment, especially upon re-entry. We also believe in the creation of a collaborative atmosphere that amplifies all voices together in a spirit of mutuality and kindness.

RELATIONSHIPS. We believe in fostering genuine, strong, and long-lasting relationships as well as walking with our residents as they navigate the path to re-entry.
SCHOOLS

1. Capital University
2. College of Wooster
3. Heidelberg University
4. Hiram College
5. John Carroll University
6. Marietta College
7. Oberlin College
8. University of Dayton
9. Baldwin Wallace University
10. Bowling Green State Univ.
11. Case Western Reserve Univ.
12. Cleveland State University

JUVENILE FACILITIES

Circleville JCF
Montgomery County CAS
Seneca County YC
Portage Geauga County JDC
Cuyahoga Hills JCF
Cuyahoga County JDC
Washington County JC
Medina County JDC
Cuyahoga County JDC
Lorain County JDH
Indian River JCF
Wood County JDC
Franklin County JDC
Impact

To understand our impact on our residents, we survey them at every creative writing workshop. These surveys give us quantitative and qualitative data so we can provide our residents with a high-quality program experience.

Our Creative Writing Workshop occurs in spring and fall seasons for 12-16 weeks. Each session runs for 60-90 minutes either in-person or remotely via Zoom or Teams and consists of 10-15 residents, 5-7 student volunteers, and 1 teaching artist. Then, we publish, showcase, and distribute chapbooks filled with our residents’ creative writing inside juvenile facilities, on campuses, and throughout the local communities to raise awareness about the juvenile justice system.

Visit writersnresidence.org to learn more!
Dear reader,

This is our third year and sixth semester working with residents at Portage-Geauga Juvenile Detention Center, and we were glad to remain back together in person with both familiar and new faces. We’ve gotten to know our residents well, and we are proud of the growth they have shown both as writers and individuals.

We chose this title from one of our resident’s poems from our workshop based on Kevin Latimer’s “Joy,” which is about space and power. The PGJDC is located in a scenic part of rural Portage County, but our residents are unable to see it. They are isolated, floating around the juvenile justice system. Through their writing, residents described how they caught glimpses of stars through narrow escape-proof windows. The residents share cramped quarters, like astronauts aboard the ISS, and are kind enough to show us around their world. Their perspective is continually enlightening. Their experiences have been vast and created wonderful conversations about family, language, identity, and cheeseburgers. This semester our writers showed much engagement in not only the weekly workshop, but the process of our organization, and we’ve enjoyed mentoring them as they created the works that appear in this chapbook. We appreciate their receptiveness to both the new and familiar. They were always willing to work with us, despite the occasions when we would forget to bring snacks or sometimes even pens. They are out of this world—if you’ll forgive us for the pun.

Covid remains an ongoing concern, and we’d like to thank the staff for working with us through every new curve and roadblock. And, of course, thank you to our residents for showing up and writing.

Hiram College Cohort
Untitled

JJ

Abortion. Tough. Push to the end.
Play games, eat, work, sleep, repeat.
There’s one race: the human race.
My heart’s crushed, not my future.
Work and school: just the start.
Great effort equals: blood, sweat, tears.
Wife and kids: tough, but great.
Writing music: that’s just the beginning.
I can do it: watch me!

Untitled

NP

I have to fail to win
Movies are better than most shows

Untitled

JH

Brandon sucks at basketball, I’m better.
Isaac and Isaiah are fraternal twins.

Untitled

AC

I am damaged, not broken yet.
I was loved, now I’m lost.
Look at now, not at then.
I gave myself; they gave pain.
The trail has lost its need.

Untitled

KM

I will be hungry all the time.
I am level four because I listen.
I will watch a lot of anime.
I like watching sports and playing.
I am a small little kid.
I’d like to play the guitar. I’ll be singing my favorite songs.
I’ll be deadlifting in my element.
I’ll be cooking for the homies.
I like getting into good anime.
Six-Word Memoir
CH

I’m blue, but I am sad.
I am cold, but I am hot. Bored, sad, home, happy brothers forever.
Brothers day ones, sisters protect forever.
Slide down the block, get them whacked.

Untitled
DC

I always like summer the best because being in the hot weather means
being able to walk to the corner store behind my house in slides,
shorts, and a tank top.
Also everybody outside listening to music playing cards, football, and
basketball.

The Reason I Like Winter
IM

I always like winter best because Christmas time always brings a kind
of nostalgic feeling that I never get.

Untitled
AW

I always liked winter best. You can drink hot chocolate from the downtown
Canton Christmas Festival.
And candy cones
And eggnog
And lots of
cookies and milk
and Christmas dinner by yourself watching Krampus. Listen to Christmas
carols and go see the light show with your dog. And sleep warm all the time.

Ravenna, OH
BW

I always liked summer best. Hanging out at city park, getting lost in the
trailer park.
The fresh cut grass, playing in the rain.
The long trips to Walmart. Octane night with all the cars. The crackheads
dancing their tune.
Or dancing in the built-up water in the backyard.
Friends all walking at night and the fresh smell of tar.
The nights, so cloudy, you can’t see the stars.
Or laying in your yard counting stars.
Summer in Ravenna.
Why I Like Summer
KM

I always like summer best because I get to swim in my friends pool, and I get to play more sports and work out with the team. I get to watch anime and peace because everyone is usually outside. The bad thing though is my dog barking when we're inside because other people are out.

Dear Dad
JS

I was in space and I just see my dad. It’s weird to see him because he died last year and I miss him and I just wish he was here. But he was the best guy that I know is a joy to me.

Better Summer
RF

I always like summer best because that’s when school is out, I can get outside more and enjoy a nice bike ride.

Love
DC

Feels like love is a game. Love is family, friends, block, hood. Boxing is forever in my blood.

Untitled
DB

I’m a reverse sour patch kid. Sweet on the outside, sour inside but overall I’m good.

Untitled
CM

I’m a baddie
I think I’m the cutest
I’m smart
I’m conniving
Hot
I got time to graduate
My smile
I’m funny
My hair
My color
Can an ant hill be a mountain?  
Is freedom all right or privilege?  
Does a judge choose law or opinion? Are self-memoirs fact or fabrications?

I'm in space with my dog trying to catch the food that's floating around us. As my dog chases ham, I sit there wondering why Peter Griffin is staring at me while I eat a chicken nugget. Then we start laughing and float away feeling joy.

Me and Bob Ross painting scenic valleys on the ISS while listening to Beethoven and drinking piña coladas.
Freestlye
DC

They say I’m not talented
but I can rap and sing
and people steady tryna to run down
but I got that choppa on me.

Untitled
RF

My father called me a piece of s**t but
I’m a good athlete,
I’m good with people
And I know I’m a good person
because my friends told me.

Untitled
CM

I would betray you now as my father on her alarm betrays him. Good, I
don’t have a bad one. No cap could be used as a lie when somebody lies.
On who!
I don’t have any emotional part of the poem. It’s okay.

Untitled
DC

An animal driving a Cadillac through space.

Untitled
CM

Ain’t gonna hold you = Not gonna lie = No lie = Not gonna snatch you up
and hold you
I’m not gonna hold you, the weather is pretty outside. Because I don’t want
to be that close to you, I’m not gonna hold you.

Untitled
DC

I’m not gon fake you coo
I’m not gon fake, I’m not gon lie to you.
The gang
My mom
I'm creative
Smart
My hair
My skin color

They said I wasn't smart
that I wasn't strong
But I'm both
I get good grades
A lot of good grades
I'm strong, I have lots of muscle

Did pizza bussin.
We were at the party jiggin then they just started bussin.

Housa - slang and definition - a lot
I got hella money
There's hella work.

Hamburgers
Hearing the sizzling of the grease.
Seeing the way it browns.
Hearing the way the grease pops.
Smelling that garlic powder onion that I could you with.
The taste of the juicy meat and cheesy taste that you give off.

This cheese pizza is klappin from Domino's.
This was a good show and it made me klap.
**Scrumptuous Bacon Cheeseburger**

**KM**

The cheesy, greasy juiciness of the burger is just so good. Mix with the tangy homemade barbecue sauce my momma puts on top. Looking at it stacked up on the plate I can just taste it before I even pick it up. Then there's the almost crunch sound as I bite through the bacon and lettuce.

**3 Seconds**

**CH**

With three seconds left to go I’m taking the ball out past to the point guard. He dribbled up to the court. With a dime of a pass to the corner. With our team mouth open. All you hear is the swish of the net. And the buzzer goes off and the crowd goes off with the win of the game.

**Collard Greens**

**IM**

My mom sweet and spicy collard greens. She usually makes it for me on my birthday. And I always look forward to my mother making them. They start to smell good.

**Untitled**

**RF**

For real
Actually

**Untitled**

**RF**

Pizza, Velveeta, shells, cheese
Creamy cheese, noodles, amazing
I always have you to have cheese with my food because it makes the food more thick.
Yes, I do like to cook meat products
Italian dishes
Away
AM

On the bus praying for my grandma.
Stepping foot on the field for the last time
Putting up numbers for her
Birds flying
Don’t know what to do
Walking off
Number three signing out
Never gonna play again

Championship
DW

CRACK!
As he ran the ball past my teammates and almost crossed the goal line for the touchdown.
I came in, helmet and shoulder down. He fumbles the ball!!
As I’m looking for where the ball fell I middle linebacker dives in and recovers it.
We are up, 21-17 with 30 seconds left on the clock.
Coach calls from the sidelines as we’re in the huddle, “KNEE IT! KNEE THE BALL!!”
And that’s game!
We knelt it and those chumps walked off the field head down as we cheer

From start
RF

Watching my little brother’s first wrestling match compared to his tournament match.
Second or first place was nice to see because of the improvement he made on his skills on the mat.

Morning Ritual
CH

In the morning I wake up and do my hobby, then I brush my teeth, then I get in the shower.
I get dressed then go make breakfast, after that I do my hobby again.
I then go somewhere for a day. I walk to the store, then I go to a friend’s house.
Granny
CK

My Gma and Aunt go to church 25/8, everyday. They even stay the night there.

Game
RF

Before a football game or a wrestling match, I listen to music that makes me angry, so I can use more strength.

Gray Trucks
AM

Dear Mariyon, You’re still learning, still becoming a man And I’m sorry your life was so tragic At a young age, but I promise it’ll get Better.

I’m also sorry you have to experience jail to open up your eyes because if it wasn’t for jail you’d probably be dead. I’m sorry, but don’t you be because I already went through it for you.

Acknowledgements

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- Residents and Juvenile Facility Staff
- Student Volunteers and Cohort Advisors
- Staff, Teaching Artists, and Contractors
- Board of Directors, Community Partners, and Donors

It takes a team to achieve what Writers in Residence does, so thank you to everyone involved!
When you donate to Writers in Residence

Your contribution sustains our Creative Writing Workshop with teaching artists, writing materials, snacks, and chapbooks.

Your support assists our residents who are reentering into their communities with limited access to social services including housing, employment, food, health care, and education.

Your generosity educates our local communities and government officials about the juvenile justice system’s traumatic effect on our youth.

Visit writersnresidence.org to donate or scan the code below.

Writers in Residence is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization incorporated in Ohio.